

TOP SALES

MAY 2020

MAGAZINE

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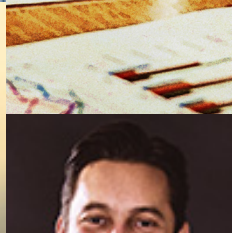
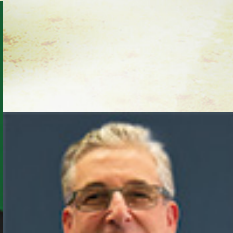
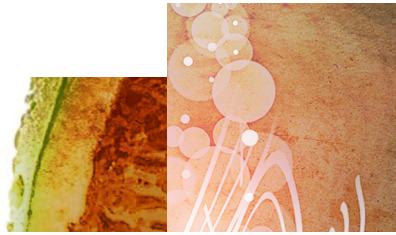
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has launched



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Jonathan Farrington interviews Colleen Stanley, President, SalesLeadership



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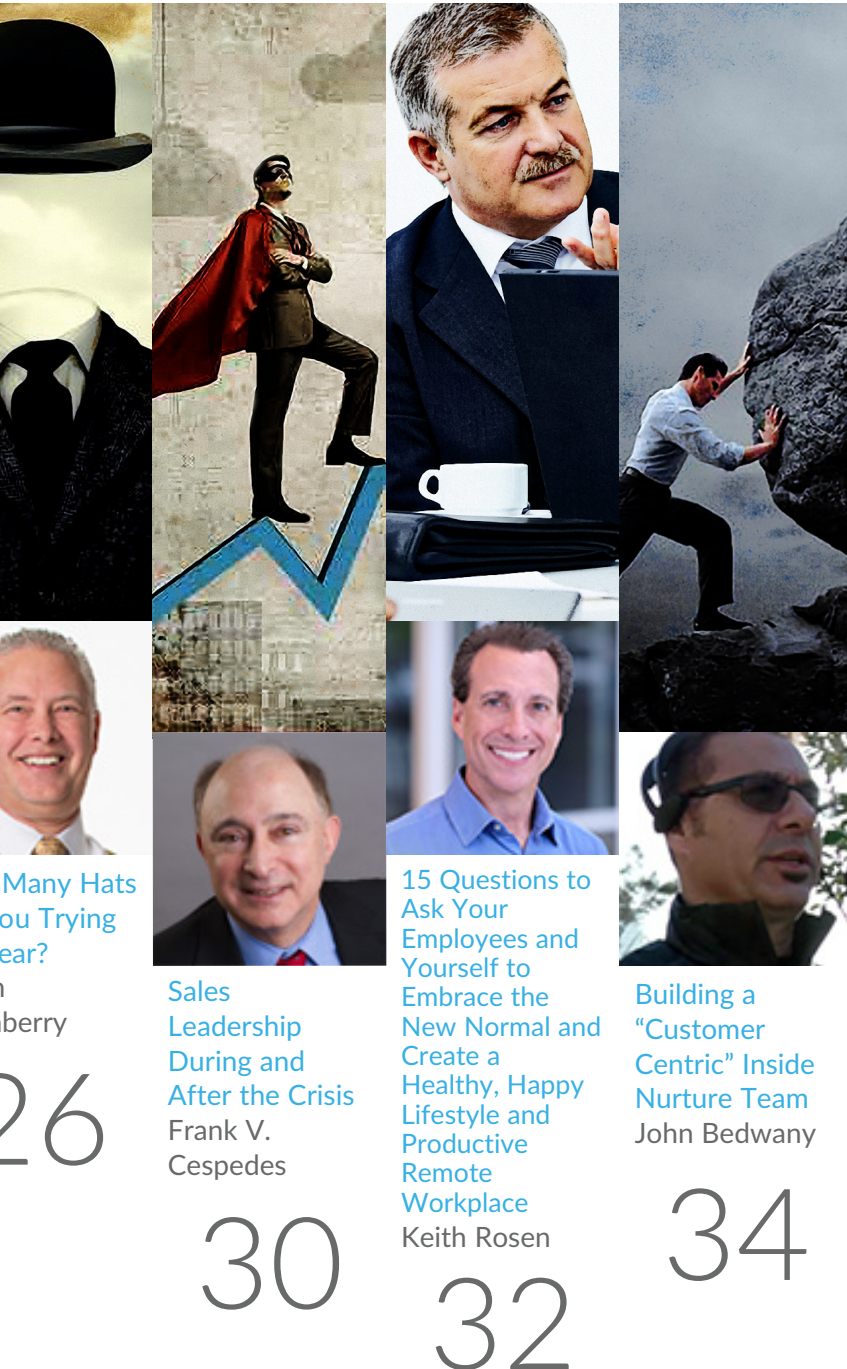
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Sandler Research Center

Capturing opinions and perceptions regarding today's most impactful selling issues.

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[NEW RESULTS]

The Hunt for New Clients

Insights to drive your organization's new business development.

Every commercial organization should focus an appropriate amount of time on hunting for and securing new clients. Too few have a clearly defined strategy that maximizes their sales function's valuable selling time and minimizes the related costs. We want to discover what is working for the most successful companies and why.

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Sandler has partnered with Top Sales World to develop the Sandler Research Center in order to deliver tangible value and make a difference in the fast-changing world of sales. The unique synergy of these two organizations will provide critical insight and direction to commercial organizations across the globe.



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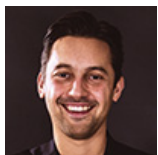
2020 Columnists

Our regular columnists provide thought-provoking commentary on the hot topics that are the most relevant and indeed, the most significant. Plus we have a [world-class team of feature writers](#) who also contribute regularly.



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Preparing to Re-Emerge from Crisis – A Timely Message for Sales Leaders



None of us know for certain what it will look or feel like when we emerge on the other side of the pandemic. What we *can* do is to try to stay as

positive as possible and, most importantly, prepare and look forward.

This is not a time for idle contemplation: It **IS** rather a time for dynamic, pro-active, preparation and rejuvenation.

Logic suggests that whatever got us where we are today will not be sufficient to keep us there in the future.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, not the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change" – Charles Darwin.

We can choose to embrace the changes, adapt,

and eventually thrive; or we can resist, and risk extinction. Willy Loman, the hero in Arthur Miller's classic *Death of a Salesman*, didn't become a bad salesman overnight – he just refused to change...

Whatever label we choose to hang on our preferred style of selling, there are now considerable implications for sales management. For companies to remain competitive now, their sales organizations must be able to respond rapidly and positively to the numerous changing tides. The role of the sales leader has become pivotal and will become even more so in the weeks and months ahead, which is why I have chosen to dedicate this editorial to providing some timely advice that I sincerely hope will strike a few chords.

Now is the time to pause and press the re-set button. We cannot afford any delays. It is critical that we re-examine what we have, what we have been doing and create a plan that addresses how buying and selling will be conducted in the "new brave sales world." I deliberately emphasize the word "brave"

because we should be in no doubt that the process of recalibration and then rejuvenation will take exceptional courage.

So, where to begin?

I believe that you must begin with your team. Employees are our most valuable resource and like any expensive investment, must be maintained and protected. Right now, while they may have emerged from their first reactionary state, which was shock, many may still be experiencing very high levels of anxiety and uncertainty. If there was ever a time for you to support and reassure them, it is now. Don't simply be inspiring, but rather you need to show empathy and understanding. It is your responsibility to maintain morale and you cannot possibly hope to do that if you are not regularly communicating with your team. Each of them will have their own challenges – and it is your challenge to discover and then attempt to navigate them through.

Next, stay very close to your existing clients/customers because if they are convinced of your commitment to them now, they will reciprocate appropriately in the future. Unless you are regularly communicating with them, you cannot possibly determine how they are faring at this time. One idea you might consider, now that we are a third of the way through the year, is to conduct a short but rigorous account review – obviously online.

To obtain maximum value from this exercise you must realize that it should be a non-sales event, which will allow you to benchmark your year-to-date performance against your client's expectations.

It is highly likely that during these reviews, you will also discover what business might be forthcoming from each client for the rest of the year, once circumstances have changed.

The reality is that receiving continual feedback against a set of established criteria is vital if an organization is to retain its top clients and seek to improve its standing and the quality of its service.

Here are seven benefits of regular feedback:

1. Feedback reveals your client's current and future plans.
2. Seeing your business from your client's point of view allows you to ask the question "Would you do business with you?" If not, why not?
3. Feedback allows you to tailor your service levels so that you enjoy maximum client satisfaction at minimal cost.
4. If you don't ask, you'll never know how you are doing – until it's too late.
5. Feedback is subject to the "iceberg factor"—a small criticism hiding a much larger problem—making it more critical than it may first appear.
6. Feedback can reveal what your competition is doing, helping you to be a consistently strong contender.
7. Gaining a reputation for wanting to hear feedback can encourage referrals and bring you more business.

How often should you solicit feedback? This will depend entirely on the importance of the account and revenue levels being achieved or anticipated. However, it is advisable to conduct a review at least annually. I conduct a quarterly review meeting with my most important clients.

And when was the last time you asked your clients how often they would like you to contact them? And have you ever asked them their preferred method of communication - i.e. email/personal visit/telephone /online conferencing? Their preferences here may well have changed, and you need to be aware of that.

Finally, map out organization charts for your most important clients, if you are planning to extend your area of influence. Why? Because most sales professionals tend to inhibit their influence in important accounts by making one or two strong contacts, and then believe they have the account all sewn up. This is folly! Most decision-making units consist of many more than just two people, so whilst you are busy selling to a few people who are already sold on you and your services/solutions, watch out for the politically-astute competitor who is gradually covering all bases. Also, be aware that the "landscape" within some, if not many, of your

accounts will have changed. There may be a need to begin establishing new relationships - and that takes time.

This is also an excellent time to re-examine some of your processes. For example, with clients and customers still in mind, when was the last time you mapped out their journey with you?

A client journey is the experience you share with your clients over time. It assists in telling the story of the client's discovery of your organization into (hopefully) a long-term relationship.

You may initially think a client journey is pretty simple to plot: you have something they want, and you sell it to them. But once you start delving into details, client journeys can be quite complex. Your clients and potential clients arrive in a multitude of ways and from many different starting points; for example, referrals, search engines, social media, marketing, email campaigns, etc.

Undoubtedly, you want to ensure that every experience a client has is as good as it can possibly be. And to ensure that no interaction slips through the cracks, it is imperative that you map out every single touchpoint and interaction along the client journey.

Do remember that a client's journey does not end after the initial purchase - in fact, in many ways, it is just beginning. The reality is that today, you are no longer just competing with having the best solution, or the lowest price or the greatest value; you are now being judged on the best experience. Therefore, if your company does not invest the time and resources necessary to understand the type of experience your clients are demanding, look out for the competitor who most certainly will. So, once you have mapped out your client's journey, make sure you put it to good use!

Excellent client experience demands the creation of a strong commercial partnership "to sustain a mutually productive relationship, which serves the needs of both parties, now and in the future." The key here is *symbiosis*. Partnership does not mean eliminating the tension between buyer

and seller - it means that top-performing organizations know how to strike a balance between achieving immediate results and fully developing the relationship.

I must re-emphasize that clients are better persuaded when they are part of the process and not part of the audience because we fully recognize that when buyers and sellers act as partners, they are building a bridge to profitability.

So far, I have discussed protecting and developing your team, as well as highlighting just how important it is to get even closer to your most important accounts. Those absolutely must be your two main priorities. But we cannot - must not - ignore that you are going to need a top-up of new business. However, before you go charging off on any more "hunting trips," you might want to take some to review your "Ideal Customer/Client Profile."

To understand what an ideal client profile is, we must first define it - and the definition I like is:

"A description of a fictitious organization which would gain significant value from using our products/services/solutions, and which also provides significant value to our company."

We need to systematically identify shared characteristics of existing clients with whom we have a mutually rewarding relationship.

Begin by making a list of your ten "best" clients. If you don't have ten ideal clients yet, you can use how many you actually have.

Next, find common attributes. This is where it is useful to brainstorm and conduct your research. Be as thorough as you possibly can because even the most obscure attribute or commonality could be significant.

You are now ready to begin constructing your ICP template, so here are some of the questions you should be asking yourself with your current clients very much in mind:

- What size of organization would you prefer to deal with?

- Typically, how many people will they employ?
- What market sector(s) do these organizations operate within?
- Who specifically will be buying your products/ services and what are their titles?
- Where geographically would you like these organizations to be located?
- What does your organization offer that is unique?
- What types of organizations will be attracted by this uniqueness?
- What do your best clients possess that you would like to replicate in others?
- Which of your existing clients were the easiest and quickest to convert?
- What similarities do these clients possess?
- Are there any specific criteria that prospective organizations should have in place, so that your products/services can be optimized?

Having a well-defined profile of your 'ideal client' can prove to be invaluable when determining which

methods to use for lead generation and improves the effectiveness of your marketing initiatives.

In summary: You will, I know, appreciate that I only have a limited amount of space here and, as a consequence, I have merely highlighted three critical areas. You will think of others, but these are the ones that I am personally focussing on.

If you haven't discovered the new **"We WILL Win Through"** section over at Top Sales World yet, I urge you to do so. Here you will find a selection of videos, articles, podcasts, webinars etc provided by Top Sales World's contributors, Top Sales Magazine's columnists and feature writers. Resources are refreshed daily, providing motivational, educational and supportive material, on demand. ■

Jonathan Farrington is the CEO of JF Initiatives. You will find his personal site [here](#) Jonathan is also Director of Research at the [Sandler Research Center](#) You can connect with Jonathan on LinkedIn [here](#)

A New Initiative Now Launched

Discover "We WILL Win Through"



TOP SALES WORLD
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How to Leverage Emotional Intelligence Into Your Sales Leadership Processes



Jonathan Farrington
interviews Colleen
Stanley, President,
SalesLeadership



JF: Colleen, congratulations on your new book, *Emotional Intelligence for Sales Leadership*. What inspired you to write another book around this topic?

CS: My first book, *Emotional Intelligence for Sales* was geared towards salespeople and the sales process. The message was really well-received and you see a lot more sales trainers, speakers and sales leaders talking about importance of emotional intelligence in the sales profession.

In my new book the content is focused on sales leaders and how they can leverage emotional intelligence into their sales leadership processes. I share solid frameworks and tools so they can actually teach these soft skills, EQ skills, to their sales team. These tools help sales leaders effectively teach soft skills that often lend up sounding like theory but no practical application.

JF: Sales managers should be hiring for emotional intelligence. Can you give me an example of a couple of emotional intelligence skills sales managers should be looking for?

CS: Delayed gratification is an important skill, particularly in a world that subscribes to instant gratification. When you examine the root cause of poor sales performance, you will often find delayed gratification---or lack of---is behind a salesperson's inability to execute consistent selling behaviors.

A salesperson that is not calling on larger deals may lack hard selling skills, the consultative skills. They don't know how to navigate through a complex business deal. However, the root cause for not calling on larger accounts might be lack of delayed-gratification skills. Instant gratification salespeople pursue easy, low-hanging fruit rather than large opportunities. Bigger deals require more meetings with multiple decision makers. *Delayed gratification*. Large opportunities require more pre-call planning in order to make each meeting relevant. *Delayed gratification*.

Another skill I address is vetting potential candidates for coachability. Customer demands and needs are constantly changing, and we are really seeing that in this today's business environment. Everyone can benefit from coaching, however, a salesperson that isn't coachable doesn't embrace feedback. As a result, their selling skills and knowledge quickly become outdated, which affects their sales results.

JF: Got it. Let's move to the important role of teaching and training your sales team. What are key emotional intelligence skills that a sales manager should be teaching to his or her sales team?

CS: I suggest starting with the three E's: Emotion

management, emotional self-awareness and empathy. The first skill I teach is emotion management. One of my very smart mentors shared this advice: If you are not stable, you are not able. A salesperson that isn't **stable** gets flustered on sales calls and isn't **able** to run a high-level, consultative sales call. Emotions, rather than effective selling and influence skills, run the meeting.

A salesperson lacking emotional self-awareness repeats the same selling mistakes over and over. That which you are not aware of you are bound to repeat.

Empathy is an important influence skill to bring to any sales conversation. Prospects have many choices and they choose to do business with salespeople that demonstrate a deep, sincere understanding of a prospect's goals, concerns and world.

JF: What do you see as the biggest challenge for sales leaders in the development of their sales teams?

CS: This answer might surprise a few sales leaders because they are probably looking for answers such as leveraging AI, managing a younger work force or dealing with the rapid pace of change.

The biggest challenge for sales leaders is their ability to teach their sales team the power of focus. If a salesperson can't focus, he can't analyze the great data generated by AI tools.

Young sales professionals grew up with technology and are comfortable using tech tools that improve effectiveness. But on the flip side, many haven't learned how to manage technology, so their smart phone is an appendage, not a sales tool. They check out of a lot of conversations to check incoming messages. (Not great for relationship building.)

Lack of focus results in many sales teams not keeping up with learning new skills because learning requires extreme focus. It's brain science 101. But many sales leaders allow their sales team to check

email and texts during training workshops or coaching sessions. You can't multitask and learn new and/or complex skills. No focus, no learning and no improvement in the skills needed to remain relevant. A non-relevant salesperson is a non-revenue producing salesperson.

JF: Interesting so...let's turn our focus to sales leaders. I am guessing they need to work at developing their emotional intelligence skills in order to model the behaviors they expect from their salespeople.

CS: You are absolutely right. I remind my clients that children model the behaviors, not the words of their parents. Children grow up to be salespeople and observe the behaviors of their sales leader. A sales manager that isn't able to manage her emotions erodes the trust of her team. Salespeople aren't sure if she is going show up in a good or bad mood. A non-empathetic sales manager might be great at tactical sales coaching. But if a seller doesn't feel like the sales manager understands him, the coaching often lands on deaf ears.

JF: Colleen, as always, great insights and thank you for sharing.

CS: Jonathan, my pleasure. Thanks for having me as your guest. ■

Colleen Stanley is president of SalesLeadership and the creator of the Ei Selling System®, a powerful sales program that integrates emotional intelligence skills and consultative selling skills. She is the author of *Emotional Intelligence For Sales Success* and *Emotional Intelligence For Sales Leadership*. Because of her innovative work, Colleen was named by Salesforce as one of the top 7 influential sales experts of the 21st century Find out more [here](#)



Only a Real Risk Tests the Reality of a Belief



It's a very powerful quote from C.S. Lewis, which he expanded on in his book, *Grief Observed*, written after his wife's death. He shared that it's easy to say you believe in the power of a rope when you're using it to tie up a box but that hanging from a cliff holding on to that same rope would help you learn just how much you really trusted it.

Of course, we've all been tested of late. And much has been written and discussed about positivity and optimism, traits that can certainly help people weather storms. But it's the power of beliefs in the real risks referred to in Lewis' quote that I'd like to focus on. And ultimately, in reference to selling.

First, some context. We're all familiar with placebos, used by pharmaceutical firms in clinical trials to gauge the effectiveness of new drug treatments. Recently, one group of migraine sufferers was given an actual pain relief drug while another group received a sugar tablet with neither

aware of which they had received. Interestingly, 50% of those receiving the placebo reported pain relief, simply through believing the placebo would help. While we can credit belief, there's also a dark side to consider.

In 1966, Japan's birth rate dropped by 25% from 1965, but rebounded to normal levels in 1967. What happened to cause such a plunge? What if I told you that the drop was fully expected as was the rebound? You see, 1966 was the Year of the Fire Horse in the 60-year Chinese Zodiac cycle. And culturally, the Japanese are quite superstitious. Many believe the ominous prophesy that female

babies born under the Fire Horse are cruelly destined for lives of misfortune. Superstitious parents, as a result, avoided having babies in 1966, convinced that babies faced doomed futures. Additionally, historical statistics prove that Japanese born under the Fire Horse die up to five years earlier than those born in other years! Such is the manifestation of negative beliefs and their very tangible effect on people. This darker side of belief is known as the nocebo effect, where negative expectations produce actual negative results - the opposite of placebos.

Interesting stuff, right? But what does it mean in terms of selling? Consider a famous Buddha quote – “What consumes your mind controls your life”. I’ll paraphrase – “What consumes your mind controls your ability to win, grow and keep clients”.

Let’s take a moment for a short exercise. Think of something positive that helps you be effective in what you do. Got something? Great. Now, what are your beliefs about why it affects you so productively? Good feelings, right? Now, think of something negative that limits your effectiveness. What are your beliefs about it and why it hinders you? Right.....not such nice feelings now.

Of course, some of what you identified as positives or negatives are concrete – your facts, your reality. But in most cases, as with placebos and nocebos, those positive and negative beliefs are simply thoughts that dictate your attitudes and behaviors. And, just like the Fire Horse, they directly dictate your results.

So, given their powerful influence, what can you do to increase the likelihood that your selling beliefs are positive? Of course, there is psychology’s guidance about using positive self-talk. For this discussion, though, let’s focus on generating positive beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. How? By building confidence. And let’s examine some practical methods and tools that confident salespeople use to build the courage to be assured in their beliefs and be successful in selling. Because confidence is not a gift from the heavens but a powerful trait that can be developed.

Let’s consider what’s different about confident salespeople versus the rest of the crowd. First, they’re comfortable saying “no”. They utilize Go/No-Go frameworks to increase the chances that the deals they pursue are the deals they’re most likely to win. And they say “no” to the others. Confident salespeople plan. Prior to a calls, meetings and presentations, they use templates religiously. If an event is worth doing, it’s worth planning for. Confident salespeople ask lots of questions. They don’t pitch. They inquire and listen intently, gaining the knowledge that breeds confidence. But you must seek it to gain it. Confident salespeople are mindful. Preconceived biases and head trash are yokes around salespeople’s necks. Especially with prospects and clients, confident reps live in the moment of every interaction, building agility for the path forward. Confident salespeople are accountable, owning their failures and learning from them. They use candid post-mortems for lessons learned from losses to insure increased effectiveness on future deals. The Go/No-Go templates I mentioned earlier, by the way, flip to become postmortem frameworks after losses. And, in the end, confident salespeople take actions. Never standing still, they’re motivated by and characterized by forward motion.

In team selling, an individual’s beliefs can affect an entire group. This raises the belief stakes, increasing the need to fortify confidence – yours and by extension, your team’s. The tools I’ve mentioned can be huge enablers to ensure that your impact on your team drives infectious positive momentum.

So, put the power of your beliefs to work by building your confidence to increase your likelihood of success. Our tests come in all shapes and sizes. But if we believe in ourselves, they can bring out the very best in us. ■

Brian Sullivan is Vice President, Sandler Enterprise Selling, Sandler Training
Find out more [here](#)



The Science Behind One Company's Top Sales Performers and Why They're So Much Better



There are comparisons of apples to oranges, red or green, black or white, stop and go, and the most relevant and current of all, liberals to conservatives.

In this article, I'll share a hot/cold comparison of my own, but this one is about sales candidates. In another recent article, I wrote about [why 3 good salespeople failed, and 3 so-so candidates succeeded](#), used the [results of a top/bottom analysis](#) to identify the reasons why.

Those results were unusual because many of the differentiators came from outside the 21 Sales Core Competencies. What does it look like when

the differentiators come from within the 21 Sales Core Competencies? Take a look at this top/bottom analysis and you'll quickly see the difference!

The screen shot below shows that we identified 21 major differentiators.

Their three tops are far better and stronger salespeople than the tops in the previous analysis. Even their bottoms are stronger than the tops and bottoms of the previous analysis. But the differentiations are very clear. Consider:

- Desire for Success in Sales (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >87. The normal cut-off is 60 so even the three bottoms scored well in Desire, but the tops had even more Desire.
- Motivation for Success in Sales (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >74. The normal cut-

The Will to Sell		Sales Percentile		Sales DNA Competencies										Selling Competencies											
Desire	Motivation (%)	Sales Percentile™ (value)	Figure-It-Out-Factor™	Sales DNA Competencies	Supportive Beliefs	Supportive Buy Cycle™	Comfortable Discussing Money	Handles Rejection	Hunting	Consultative Selling	Selling Value	Qualifying	Presentation Approach	Closing	Sales Process	Compatibility	Maintains Full Pipeline	Sales Process	Self-Starter	Decision-making	# met	% met			
88%	75%	80%	67%	82%	87	71	83	83	67%	50%	91%	60%	82%	34%	78%	80%	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	21	100%			
93%	85%	94%	90%	85%	89	71	100	78	93%	50%	91%	69%	82%	34%	85%	68%	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	21	100%			
100%	100%	97%	83%	85%	91	71	83	94	93%	57%	93%	69%	100%	31%	87%	72%	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	20	95%			
83%	65%	23%	70%	57%	83	29	50	72	76%	33%	50%	46%	77%	0%	24%	64%	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	2	10%			
84%	68%	70%	55%	74%	85	14	83	72	73%	46%	70%	40%	81%	28%	63%	84%	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	2	10%			
98%	95%	54%	60%	66%	85	29	33	94	94%	49%	65%	43%	59%	13%	58%	60%	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	4	19%			
>87	>74	>79	>66	>81	>86	>70	>82	>77	>92	>49	>90	>59	>81	>33	>77	>71	strong	strong	strong	strong					

off is 50 so as with Desire, even the bottoms had good scores.

- Sales Percentile is the overall score. Greater than 79 means that their tops are stronger than 79% of the sales population. And if that's what it takes to succeed in this particular role at this particular company, then the sales candidates that OMG will recommend to them must be in the top 20%.
- Figure-it-Out-Factor or FIOF is a roll-up of 10 findings that predict whether or not a salesperson will ramp-up more quickly than a typical candidate. Those who are succeeding at this company have FIOF scores of greater than 66.
- The Sales DNA Competencies are the overall score for 6 of the 21 Sales Core Competencies. These are the combination of strengths that support the execution of sales process, sales strategy, sales tactics and sales methodology. The tops have tremendous Sales DNA Scores of >81 while the bottoms have Sales DNA more consistent with weak salespeople.
- **Supportive Sales Beliefs** (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies and one of the six that make up Sales DNA) >86. You could say that everything begins with beliefs! Their top salespeople have scores for beliefs that are only a few points better than their bottoms so a score of 86 or better is an important differentiator.
- Supportive Buy Cycle (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies and one of the six that make up Sales DNA) >70. There is a huge difference in how the tops score compared with the bottoms for this competency!
- Comfortable Discussing Money (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies and one of the six that make up Sales DNA) >82.
- Handles Rejection (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies and one of the six that make up Sales DNA) >77.
- Hunting (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >92. These are really good scores, so it should come as no surprise that their tops are filling the pipeline!

- Consultative Seller (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >49. This is the second lowest cut-off score of all the differentiators we identified. The company overall is still selling transactionally, and this is an area for improvement.
- Qualifying (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >59. This is another significant differentiator between their tops and bottoms.
- Presentation Approach (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >81.
- Closing (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >33. Did you see the scores for the bottoms?
- Sales Process (one of the 21 Sales Core Competencies) >77. Another huge differentiation. It's included twice in this analysis to give it twice the weight because it's that important.
- Compatibility with their Selling Environment >71
- Maintains Full Pipeline (part of the Hunter competency)
- Self-Starter
- Decision Maker (part of the Buy Cycle Competency)

Like I always say, these are different for every role at every company selling into every market. No two analyses are the same and these analyses become the second layer of customization for our sales candidate assessments. That's what makes them so accurate and predictive.

For brand new users, our top/bottom analyses also serve as proof of concept. We're able to prove that we can clearly differentiate between their tops and bottoms to give them confidence that our award-winning sales candidate assessments will work for them.

Where can you get your hands on our sales candidate assessments? Click [here](#). ■

Dave Kurlan is CEO of Objective Management Group and Kurlan & Associates.
Find out more [here](#)



Sales and Marketing Must Change the Way They Engage and Deliver Customer Value, Right Now



COVID-19 has forced many organizations to shift rapidly to virtual meetings, virtual events and fully digital programs and techniques.

Field driven sales and marketing activities as we've known them have stopped for some organizations, and for others, they have been severely constrained. Getting access to the full suite of decision makers and decision influencers on any given deal was very challenging before; now it is much more difficult and, in some cases, not realistically achievable. Direct and partner selling has changed. Some companies are already sophisticated digital users, but many are not. As digital becomes increasingly important now that in-person touch points have been eliminated for the time being, what should a sales leader be thinking about, and more important, what should a sales and marketing leader be doing right now?

For your and your customers' sake, here are some steps to take:

1. Align, and Align Again. It's more important than

ever to provide your customers with a valuable experience when they engage with you. Now's the time to make sure you have sales and marketing alignment in place. Even if you think you're perfectly aligned, check again. If you haven't synced up all of your digital and virtual customer touch points and tactics, across your company, *for what's right for this moment, you must.* Start with sales and marketing, and include customer support, too. Get everyone on the same page internally and rally the teams. What's more, no customer wants to get disjointed or tone-deaf messages from you, especially now. Instead, they need to know how you can help them, conveyed in the most straightforward way possible. Simply "going digital" isn't enough. Get your strategy and alignment right, and good things -- and good customer experience -- will follow.

2. Rethink Your Selected Accounts. Right now,

sadly, some industries and companies have been severely affected or even shut down due to COVID-19. Others are able to push on and still others are thriving due to the essential goods and services they provide. As you reassess, use your valuable insights from your sales and marketing teams, plus your own internal analytics, *and* collect the available industry data that reflect the *moment*. Then use all of this to narrow down a target list that focuses on those companies still seeking solutions to serve their markets. Set aside for now those that are not. If you haven't taken companies off of your selected list, try again. Be deliberate and focused on the essential areas in which to invest your precious time and resources, for right now.

3. Stand in Your Customers' Shoes. Think about what your customers are going through today. This is not Business As Usual. Carefully consider the tone of your messages, and their frequency (fewer!). Your customers themselves are being forced to make tough decisions internally. Now is the time to demonstrate that you understand what they're facing within their own businesses, and how you can best help them serve *their* customers.

4. Always Deliver Value. We're all affected by this pandemic in some way. Delivering value is always important but it's essential now. Value is always defined by what's important to your customer, from *their* perspective, in the way that will help them do *their job* more effectively and serve *their* customers more successfully. Use the customer insights and motivations you've gained over time. Consider their company's business objectives. Chances are they've changed recently. Find out how. If you're able to express and provide real value to your customers when they need it most, they won't soon forget this. And you'll feel good about it, too.

5. Don't Waste Time and Money. No one can afford to do this, especially now. Carefully think through every aspect of your go-to-market plan.

Use all of the steps above as a check list. Please do this: Get aligned. Select viable accounts and deselect others. Show empathy. Deliver value based on what you know or have learned about your customers and their industries' current challenges.

We've navigated through crises before. This one clearly is different. We've already felt and witnessed some jarring changes, and more are on the way. We will persevere by becoming even closer to our own team members and our customers, and by taking the right steps to provide demonstrable value in this time of intense difficulty.

The lessons learned in 2008 and 2009 should not be forgotten. The firms that somehow figured out how to "invest" during that crisis came out of the period of difficulty much stronger and were off to the races as conditions improved. Those that jumped in the bunker – and stayed there -- struggled. This "investment" need not always be a financial investment. This "investment" can be, as we suggest, using the crisis to clarify a value proposition, to tailor messages to highlight unique value for the times we are in, and most of all, to be sure that your team members are motivated, too. Ensure marketing and sales are fully aligned and are working from a mutually developed *and* mutually agreed-to playbook. The future of a successful sales organization's ability to build and maintain relationships with customers is, now more than ever, inextricably linked to effective and seamless orchestration with their marketing partners. ■

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Ron Greenberg is CEO of GROWBILIZE, a global, strategic consultancy focused on helping organizations deliver results within their most valuable accounts through account--based sales and marketing, and is an external consultant for Mentor Group. Find out more [here](#)

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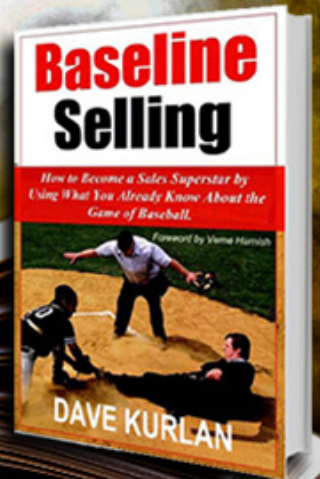
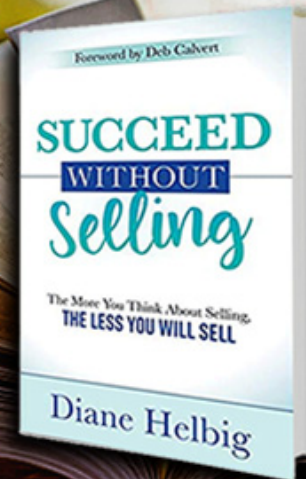
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THIS MONTH'S TOP SALES BOOKS

Each week, the Top Sales World editorial team select a book to promote. These were our selections for March – we think you will enjoy all of them.



Click on each book for more details

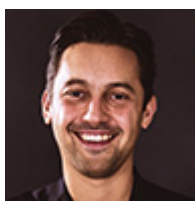
2020 Top 50 Sales & Marketing Blogs

For the 8th year running, Top Sales World has announced their Top 50 Sales & Marketing Blogs. As we always do, the editorial team want to re-iterate that we are not suggesting that these are necessarily the best, but they are all personal favorites that we try to read on a regular basis because of their high quality.

Yet again this year, we invited nominations and we received in excess of 300, so thank you to everyone who took the time to recommend their favorites. As in previous years, it is an eclectic mix, covering most sales disciplines and if there are any here that you have yet to discover, we suggest you do so without further delay. Congratulations everyone! [VISIT HERE](#)



How to Prepare Your Sales Team for Bounce-Back After the Crisis



Most of Europe and the United States has been in a state of response to the novel Coronavirus pandemic for a few weeks

now, and most of us are settling into a new sense of “normal.”

For sales teams, the new “normal” probably includes a lot more working from home, a good deal less travel, and, in many cases, working harder and smarter for the same (or lesser) results, due to a global economy that is in shock mode.

There is very little that is certain about this situation, but one thing that is almost always true: For every decline, there is a bounce-back. And those who are best positioned to manage the bounce-back will be the ones who benefit most from it.

Here’s how to prepare your sales team now for the bounce-back after this crisis.

1. Revisit your strategy

Hopefully, your sales team is spending a lot of time these days talking with customers about what’s going on for them. You should be gathering this as data (in a structured way) so that you can adjust your

sales strategy around customer needs and behavior.

A customer-focused strategy is always important to a sales organization, but in these times when everyone is examining their budgets and looking for ways to do more with less money, it’s especially critical to make sure that you are on-point and make changes accordingly.

2. Modify your process to align with the new strategy

Based on your customer-focused strategy, review the sales process your salespeople use and adjust it to accommodate your new understanding and best practices for the current environment. Get it out there fast, including a message about why it is important and how to actually perform the extra steps and activities that are needed.

3. Evaluate your sales tools

Sales tools are a major source of hidden overspending in sales organizations. Take the time to review your entire sales stack and eliminate tools that are not returning on your investment and/or don’t support your business processes.

Review your central tool, the CRM, and make sure that it meets these criteria:

- It allows you to easily embed your process in the salespeople’s workflow

- It's easy to customize quickly to accommodate a changing marketplace
- It's beautiful and intuitive to use so your salespeople don't require expensive and time-consuming training just to get started
- It is not stealing productivity by having bloated screens that take forever to load and requires unnecessary task- and tool switching

This could be a good time to consider whether using an overly complex, cumbersome CRM just because it's the "done thing" is still right for you. The CRM decision you made years back was probably the right one back then, but is it the right one today, and in the future?

4. Consider the people on your team

In times like these, "consider the people on your team" has several levels. First and foremost, remember that your salespeople are humans with human emotions, and this may be a difficult time for them. Have your coaches and managers check in on the people in their line of report and connect with them on a human level. Try to provide as much support and reassurance as you can. Besides being the right thing to do, this approach will be beneficial to your bottom line. People who feel secure and supported will perform better and bounce back better.

Second, take the time to review whether you have the right people in the right seats. Times like these can force difficult personnel decisions. As much as possible, make those decisions from a place of clarity about the correct fit for each role, which roles are necessary for stability, growth, and expansion, and not from a place of emotion or fear.

Then make sure that the people on your team are supported by the training, coaching, and enablement you provide.

5. Provide MORE training and coaching, not less

As tempting as it is to draw back on training and coaching during difficult times, that is the wrong

approach if you want to come back strong. Your team needs new skills and encouragement in order to continue to perform in this new environment.

Training should be aligned with your new strategies and processes, and it should be reinforced in coaching and in the CRM. Coaching, in turn, should be aligned with training. Make sure you are providing your coaches with the data and tools to see where their coaching time can best be used and how best to approach each salesperson on their team.

6. Put it all online

Most of us are now working from home. Many of us have been for a long time, but others may be more accustomed to an office environment. Working from home presents many challenges. Among them is the difficulty of executing new strategies, processes, training, and coaching when your team is remote and/or widespread, and when you can't just bring them into the office for training.

However you do it, it's critical that you be prepared to manage every aspect of your team and their performance online for the foreseeable future.

7. Remain flexible and agile

Long, long gone are the days when you can develop a master plan and expect it to remain unchanged until the next year's annual planning meeting.

You must be prepared to be flexible, agile, and able to execute new strategies and processes across widespread teams at a moment's notice.

Your technology should be flexible, customizable, online, and capable of fully enabling your sales force with access to everything they need to perform their best. ■

George Brontén is the Founder and CEO of Membrain and author of the award-winning blog "*Art & Science of Complex Sales*". You can connect with George on [LinkedIn](#) and follow the blog here: membrain.com/blog



Selling During Tough Times



We live in unprecedented times. Few understand how the 'new normal' will emerge and what they must do to survive and

then thrive. Here is how to sell when your potential customers are experiencing a crisis.

First, always engage with empathy. Most of your potential or current customers are worried about their own job, their team and the viability of their business. Where you have existing relationships, ask if they are okay and if there is anything you can do to help. Don't push and instead show the right intent. But beyond the initial conversations, don't endlessly check-in, reach out, or virtue-signal... there is no value in that for your clients. You need an actionable point-of-view on how you can help.

The best businesses in the COVID-19 crisis have innovated with **practical ways to help clients** and they often do it for free. Zoom, Salesforce and Qualtrics are excellent examples in offering free

access to platforms that make a real difference in remote collaboration and engagement.

Once you've shown empathy and proactively provided additional value, you then need to help your clients lift their eyes to the other side of the valley. What we are all experiencing amidst this Covid-induced isolation is not the new normal. We will emerge into the toughest economic period since The Great Depression. Make no mistake; the early 2020s will be known as The Great Recession. To come out of it as fast as possible we need entrepreneurs, leaders and **salespeople to stimulate the economy** by investing and then persuading others to do the same.

Every board and senior leadership team is firmly focused on cutting costs, protecting cash-flow and creating lean business models. The 'new normal' will emerge in the back-end of 2020 with harsh economic realities. Sellers who are unable to co-create a vision for a better future with their clients, and then nail the business case for the customer investing, are in trouble. In this decade, **commercial acumen is the new table stakes** for business-to-business sales professionals.

Again, almost all businesses are now focused on reducing costs, improving cash-flow and operating lean business models for greatest efficiency and

competitive advantage. Ask yourself whether you address their drivers... and be brutally honest with yourself because product/market fit is now essential. Your Ideal Customer Profiles (ICPs) and buyer personas have changed... update them now! For those selling to governments, be ready for inevitable austerity measures as central and state governments grapple with record levels of debt. **All sellers must sharpen their conversations** by honing their narrative around the commercial value of investing in what they sell.

Software driven automation will accelerate as white-collar job redundancies bite harder. Everyone needs to create the necessary level of value to fund their role, and they need to create that value for both their customers and employer. Relationships alone will not save a seller operating as a 'professional visitor' or 'transactor of commodities' in tough times because there is not enough value being created. **All salespeople need TQ** (technical quotient) if they are to survive.

Sales professionals must leverage the uniquely human ability to be creative, deal with ambiguity, navigate politics, build a business case, create emotional connection, secure consensus for change while managing risk and instilling trust. Machines, on the other hand, are excellent at automating repetitive tasks (on the factory floor or in the back-office), managing and analysing big data, finding signals amidst the noise, and equipping those with TQ to become super-human. Make no mistake, **mind-boggling change is new normal** – from a health crisis to an economic crisis, where all boards and leaders desperately seek to survive by cutting costs, to further technology-driven disruption.

The fourth industrial revolution is already here, and all of us must up our game. Lift your eyes out of the valley to the other side. Set a vision for you and your customers to emerge stronger. Those who fail to embrace technology and doomed to be replaced by it. We are in the age of the machines, where the bots seek to reign supreme. Here are essential skills needed to survive and thrive in

these new tough times:

- **Go beyond IQ and EQ to now have TQ with super-human levels of effectiveness.** Can you build a boolean search, do you know how to use your own CRM, Sales Navigator and sales intelligence tools properly. Can you build sequences in outbound automation tools? Invest in your own education and enablement like never before.
- **Have empathy and insight in providing real value in conversations** that 'lead to', not 'lead with' the product, service or solution you sell. Create a worthwhile point-of-view in your conversation narrative to earn engagement with decision-makers. Make it all about them, not you.
- **Become a masterful digital seller.** Look them in the camera rather than the screen when on video calls. Encourage everyone to have their camera on and create engagement through participation. Don't deliver monologues or tortuous slides or demos. Regularly switch back to 'gallery view' with everyone's face on screen. Make sure your lighting and audio is good, mute when not speaking, frame yourself on the screen and lift your energy.

We will return to good times at conferences, bars and boardrooms for drinks and social interaction. In the meantime, sharpen-up while working harder and smarter to adapt and thrive... for yourself and all those who depend on you – family, colleagues, company, partners and customers. The success of salespeople has never been more important for the economy and society. ■

Tony Hughes is a bestselling author and #1 award-winning blogger on the topic of B2B sales leadership. He is also cofounder and Sales Innovation Director at Sales IQ Global.

He can be found in [LinkedIn](#) and at [TonyHughes.com.au](#), [RSVPselling.com](#) and [salesIQglobal.com](#)



Revenue Rebound: Plan Now to Sell Later



In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the business climate has been disrupted in an unprecedented manner.

There have been a number of reactions to the disruptions. Some of the more common in B2B I am witnessing are that leadership and employees alike are taking a reduction in pay and hours, with others turning to furloughs or layoffs to manage cash flow constraints. There just is not the same level of work to be done for most parties. Customers are home, and there is less access to buyers for “selling time.”

Right when disruption hit, most of us took a pause to assess the situation and get our footing. We paid attention to our loved ones and households, and we looked to world leaders to see where this was headed next. In reality, there was limited clarity, only projections and caution as we

waited out what we hope is the worst health crisis we will witness in our lifetimes.

Yet, even amidst these unsettling and uncertain times, we know the situation will not last forever. Across the globe, states and countries are starting to ease social distancing guidelines and re-opening businesses. And in the aftermath, true organizational leaders will stand out in the marketplace for how they respond to the “Revenue Rebound,” resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

How they manage to do so depends heavily on the actions they have taken in the midst of the uncertainty to prepare for the rebound ahead. While some freeze with reduced sales-cycle activity, true leadership is leveraging this time to prepare to serve their customers for the other side of the pandemic.

Prepare for Outward Shifts

Our business environments will likely not go back to how they were before coronavirus plagued the world. The future is always different from the

present, even without a major disruptor and catalyst for change. From this pandemic in fact, many organizations have uncovered new and urgent needs. These are issues like supply chain volatility, virtual workforces and talent alignment that have shown their weakness in times of strain.

Similar to coming out of the 2008/2009 recession, we can expect buyers to look for ways to gain even more control of the buying journey. Then, they were able to shift the buying journey from relying exclusively (or primarily) on salespeople as the gatekeeper of vital solution information to demanding salespeople provide specific and deep value, while buyers perform solution research on their own through digital methods and with more readily accessible peer communities. This trend likely will be intensified in the coming weeks and months as sellers seek out ways to support customers with even greater value and specific conversations centered around their pains post-shutdown, slowdown or disruption.

Your buyers will have new pains which you must be ready to help them overcome. What will the shift be in your industry? How are you responding? The leaders of the Revenue Rebound are predicting what those pains will be — and how their solutions and value messaging strategy can address them.

Look Inward for Strategic Action

While your sales cycles have significantly slowed down or altogether stalled, proactive investments in your business and team set you up for better and quicker success once cycles fully restart — especially in the event you are still retaining your team.

Leadership that intelligently forecasts the future market pulse and environment is better situated to make internal preparations to align with their buyers. This means building out differentiated value messaging specific to the buying needs for the journey ahead, and then enabling front-line sellers and sales managers with new and effective playbooks, playsheets and sales tools accordingly.

But these tools alone will not make an impact on your selling power. The last and vital link requires training your salespeople with this messaging and tools. Do not just hand over the keys to the car; teach your people how to drive first.

Today's virtual communications platforms make this undertaking more feasible in a remote work environment. While in-person remains the epitome of engagement and effectiveness, there are options that allow for engaged virtual sessions, seamless break-aways into sub-groups, role-play exercises and more. With people's calendars clearer, it is easier to schedule. And, by splitting workshops and training into smaller chunks rather than all-day ordeals, you avoid the multitasking that has so often prevailed for the audience's attention behind the screen.

Seek to Serve — and You Will Win

The worst thing a seller can do now and in the post-COVID-19 future is to pretend everything is the same, that none of this happened. This situation demands a response. There is no denying it.

If you do not lead your industry forward with compelling and crisp messaging specific to the aftermath of these devastating times, your competition very well may beat you to it, while you are forced to play catch-up in their wake.

Now is the time to strategize how you go-to-market, how you deploy products, how you supply solutions, how you manufacture, how you Seek to Serve, Not to Sell™. Your business has been impacted by the pandemic — as has your buyers' — and as such everything must shift, refresh, renew.

There is no better time than now to prove your value to your buyers, whether here or now — or preparing to serve them in the future.

How are you going to lead the charge? Embrace the "Revenue Rebound." ■

Jay Mitchell is Founder & President of Mereo.
Find out more [here](#)



How Many Hats are You Trying to Wear?



I don't know exactly how many hats you have to wear now. But I'm guessing that during this Shutdown the

expectations that you have for yourself (or others have for you) has changed.

Since everyone's situation is different, I can't give you a definitive description or perfectly applicable advice. But I can list the roles you might have - the hats you are wearing that have changed in the last few weeks.

- **Parent.** If your kids live with you, you are spending more time than ever together. If your kids are grown and gone, you might be missing them in ways you hadn't imagined.
- **Team member.** If you are working from home, there is a lot that has changed, isn't there? If you are working onsite, like you always have, it's different, with different stressors, different

dynamics, and maybe different hours. And if you have been furloughed or laid-off, you probably yearn for the chance to put on your team member hat again.

- **Leader.** If you are the leader of a team, you are leading in situations with pressures and challenges than you have faced before. If you can't adjust, you and your team will suffer.
- **Sales professional.** Like always you are trying to add value through your products and services for your customer and prospects. What matters to them most may have changed, and that has a huge impact on you and how you sell. (That's the big idea of this article!)
- **Teacher.** Perhaps you are taking on the role of teaching your children, helping them in ways you might not even feel equipped to do.
- **Spouse.** Like with your kids, you might be spending more time than you can remember with them. While that may be wonderful, it is certainly different. And remember that your spouse is dealing with all these changes too.

I could list more hats or roles, and for each one it

would further my point that managing multiple roles has likely never more challenging than now.

Wearing Them Well

Managing multiple roles is always hard. In times of uncertainty and change, it gets harder. How do you manage these dynamics and the changing needs people have now?

By setting revised expectations.

Whether you call them expectations, boundaries, or agreements they are a part of all relationships, even if implied. To serve others in your life well—especially in times of change – you need to talk about them and make them explicit and agreed to. Perhaps that will be hard with a toddler, but in all the other roles, time spent agreeing on how you are going to succeed together will be time well spent.

As a sales professional this idea still applies. While you may not be setting these expectations, the expectations of your buyer have changed – perhaps drastically – and it isn't just about the specifics of what you sell. Their priorities, focus, attention span and more are all different than two months ago, in part because they must keep changing hats too.

The Hat You Might Be Forgetting

While you might not be wearing all the hats I just mentioned, there is an important one I left out that you certainly wear. Don't forget your personal hat.

Are you taking care of yourself?

Are you eating right, getting sleep and exercise?

Are you doing things that will help you be mentally and emotionally healthy too?

If not, remember this: you can't serve others well unless you take care of yourself.

One at a Time

Hats can be a lovely fashion statement, but they are worn one at a time. Perhaps now more than ever

you are trying to wear multiple hats at once. If you are doing it, you know that it probably isn't working. As much as possible (and this is where your expectations conversations can come into play), wear one hat at a time. Yes, you may have to change hats frequently. But when you think about changing roles (hats) consciously you will be instantly more effective, whichever hat you are wearing.

One Final Thought

Everyone you are interacting with now, at work or otherwise is dealing with their own complicated role changes. For some, the changes might be small, of others they may seem insurmountable. If you are leading, selling to or interacting with others (even those in your own house) recognize that what they are experiencing is probably different than what you are.

Never has empathy been more important for us if we want to build relationships, trust and connection with others. Hopefully this article gives you both food for thought and actions you can take so you can manage multiple roles a bit more confidently and comfortably now.

Recently I led a live online discussion titled *Juggling Balls You Can't Drop: How to be Successful Parent, Employee, Teacher (and Spouse) Without Going Crazy* – and we talked about many of these hats, but mostly the teacher and parent hat. The recording is available and is completely free! The easiest place to see it is [here](#). You can listen and learn and gain access to the resource tool we created too.

This recording may be what you need as you wear your parent and teacher hats but might also provide you real insights into who your customers are and what they are thinking about today. ■

Kevin Eikenberry is the Chief Potential Officer of the Kevin Eikenberry Group, leader of a remote team, and the author of many books including *The Long-Distance Leader* and the upcoming *The Long-Distance Teammate* (both with Wayne Turmel). Learn more [here](#)

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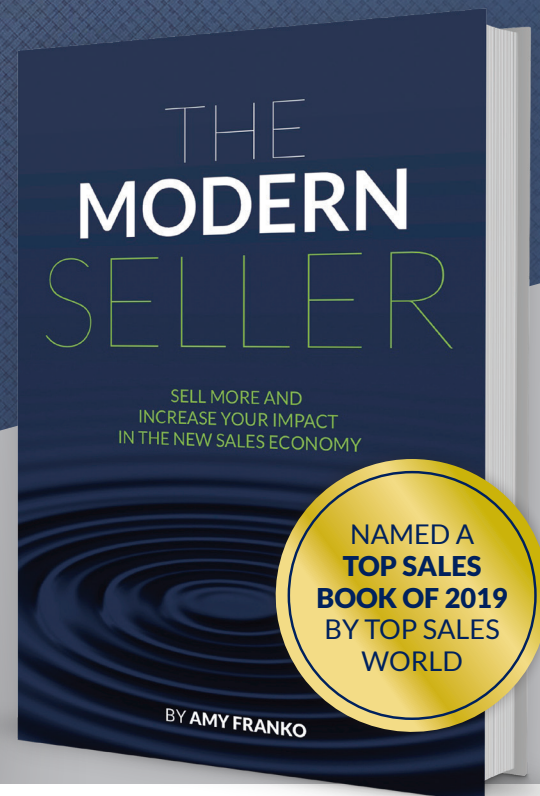


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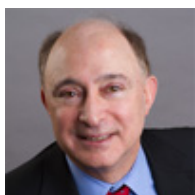
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Sales Leadership During and After the Crisis



Even in good times, life in a sales organization is filled with short-term deadlines and pressures: sales per quarter, sales

per rep, did she or didn't she meet quota. As a sales manager once said to me, "In this job, if you don't survive the short term, you don't need to worry about the long term."

So, it's not surprising that, in the current crisis, sales managers daily receive advice about the short term: "3 Steps to Survive the Downturn . . . 4 Ways to Embrace Your Customer . . . 5 Ways to Do Online Events," and so on. These suggestions are relevant: survival is at stake for many businesses. But eventually the pandemic will abate, and you must live with the resource decisions you make now.

Sales managers' responsibilities extend beyond keeping the lights on. Their leadership makes a difference across the business because, for better or worse, selling activities always affect core drivers of enterprise value. The current frightening hiatus from business-as-usual is an example. In thinking about how to restart business, sales managers—whatever else they do—should pay attention to the following:

Cash and Selling Cycles. The crisis has demonstrated, painfully, the importance of cash. As the song in the musical *Oliver* puts it: "Money in the bank, that's what counts / Money in the bank in large amounts." The selling cycle is usually the biggest driver of cash out and cash in. Accounts payable accrue during selling, and accounts receivable are mainly determined by what's sold at what price and how fast.

In surviving and recovering from a crisis, increasing close rates, the efficiency of a sales model and its segment focus are vital activities. Consider: what's the impact on your company from shortening

selling cycles and accelerating time-to-cash by 1 week, 2 weeks, or more? Who are the customers and segments where that is more likely? If you don't know, now is the time to find out. It's also the time to work on better customer onboarding and training practices that can accelerate time-to-productivity for your sales team and company after the crisis.

Scope and Customer Selection. "Scope" is the strategy term for the choices companies make about where to play. Every firm is always making it easier or harder for different types of customers to do business with it. In practice, scope is not determined by senior executives sitting in a room and discussing the market: that's brainstorming. Scope is determined by the daily call patterns of the sales organization: where that time, effort, and selling expenses are or are not allocated.

No company sells to a market. It sells to specific customers. In crisis situations, you can't do everything and must set priorities. Make sure that key customers are aware of supply disruptions or other problems. Don't assume that, in a pandemic, "everyone knows": they are absorbed with their own business issues. Big accounts drive a disproportionate amount of revenue at most firms (the 80:20 rule), and reliance on large customers has grown. Publicly traded U.S. companies must disclose any customers that account for more than 10% of their revenues. A recent study found that, in many industries, these buyers were 20 – 25% of sales by 2015, up from less than 10% two decades earlier. In other words, even before the pandemic, there was a big change in the customer portfolio of many companies.

Your salespeople must send consistent messages to customers, not ad hoc responses. Don't leave this aspect of crisis management to emails about your "commitment" to customers, or telling reps to "stay focused and take care of customers." That's an invitation for fragmented responses, multiple promises, and longer-term costs to the brand and strategy. Managers must manage. In an extended

disruption, it may even be in your long-term interest to find supply alternatives for a customer.

Data and Process: To do the above, you need good customer data: the profitability of different accounts, your cost-to-serve customer A versus customer B, who at accounts are the buyers and influencers with whom we must stay connected, and so on. My experience on Boards is that visioning discussions are fun, and quarterly financial results are tracked closely. But the customer information required to survive and then restart the business after a downturn is often lacking. One reason is that in many firms that data is effectively the "property" of the individual rep, not the company, making it difficult to set segment and customer priorities.

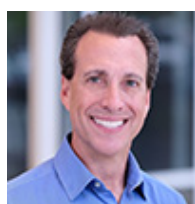
Use the current time to get this data and establish a process for keeping that front-line information flowing and timely. A key process is performance reviews, because much of the relevant information is at the account level. When sales managers do sloppy reviews, they perpetuate a culture of underperformance and inhibit the flow of this information. Then, during and after a crisis, "customer focus" remains a slogan, not organizational reality.

Let me be clear: my message here is not a version of "chin-up: every crisis is an opportunity." Maybe, maybe not. My message is that because customer acquisition and retention are the lifeblood of a company, sales managers establish foundational conditions for a business. When much of the world economy is shut for weeks and possibly months, cascading bankruptcies and high debt loads mean a tightening of purchasing decisions, cap-ex and other expenditures in most markets. Your sales efforts will need to be more focused and productive after the crisis. Stay healthy and start now. ■

Frank Cespedes teaches at Harvard Business School and is the author most recently of *Aligning Strategy and Sales* (Harvard Business Review Press). Find out more [here](#)



15 Questions to Ask Your Employees and Yourself to Embrace the New Normal and Create a Healthy, Happy Lifestyle and Productive Remote Workplace



Managers and their teams who have been trained on how to work, coach and sell remotely around this unprecedented change and transition are experiencing breakthrough results. These 15 questions will help you and your remote team increase personal productivity while maintaining a healthy, balanced life.

With the exponentially explosive and sudden global shift around how companies, teams, and customers operate, sell, communicate and collaborate, especially when it comes to managing your team remotely, many managers question how proficient they can be at managing, motivating, coaching and holding their team accountable at a distance, especially if the manager has never managed a virtual team.

To compound this, unless already woven into your company's current culture, most employees who are suddenly being pushed into becoming a remote employee have never worked remotely before in their career! In fact, Owl Labs reported that 58% of remote workers and 67% of remote managers received no training on how to work remotely.

While working remotely has many benefits, like anything else in life, there are drawbacks. Inc. found in a recent study that 41% of remote workers struggled with work-life balance.

Virtual Assumptions Will Destroy Your Team and Customer Relationships

Even if you're used to working remotely, no one is used to working remotely in our new world. Instead of making the costly assumption that your team and customers are doing fine, take the time to schedule a one on one with each person on your team and have this conversation to ensure you're creating and maintaining a healthy remote team and workplace for them.

15 Essential Questions to Ask Your Employees, and Yourself to Create a Healthy, Balanced Lifestyle,

and a Productive, and Supportive Remote Team

Before you rapid-fire these questions to anyone, it's essential you set positive intent, the WHY behind asking the questions and what the benefits are to them. Here's an Enrollment Template to position the conversation.

With the extreme change around how we live and work, especially now that we're all working remotely, it's easy to feel isolated and uncertain about the future. That's why I wanted to discuss how I can best support you in this new environment so that you still feel productive and connected to the team, the company, and to your career goals and opportunities while maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Are you open to talking about this now?

Once you've clarified your positive intent and the value that's in it for them, here are the questions to ask.

1. How are you feeling about this transition?
2. What's working well for you so far?
3. What are you struggling with most?
4. How are you managing and balancing your personal responsibilities and priorities, while staying productive at work?
5. Walk me through how you're currently managing your day? Can you send me a screenshot of what your daily routine looks like so we can compare how we both manage our day and learn from each other?
6. How have you set boundaries and expectations with your family when you're working at home to ensure you're productive and not distracted?
7. What's your self-care regimen? (Physically, mentally) How much time are you spending each day taking care of you? (Exercise, meditation, taking a walk, getting out of your house/workspace each day? The health benefits of getting outside are priceless.)
8. How are you turning off work at the end of the day so you can be present with your family and yourself?
9. What did you assume would be difficult about this transition but wasn't?
10. What did you assume would be easy about this transition but was more challenging than you thought?
11. What can you do to stay connected to me and the team so that you don't feel alone or isolated?
12. What's your preferred method of communication? (Email, text, phone, video conference, carrier pigeon, smoke signals, Morse code)
13. How often do you want to connect/schedule one on ones? What cadence works best for you?
14. How can I best support you to create a productive, rewarding and supportive workplace that would ensure you're achieving your business goals while honoring your lifestyle, core values, personal goals, and priorities?
15. **Create the Accountability Partner Agreement:**
To ensure we're both supporting each other while holding each other to our commitments, can we both agree to be each other's accountability partner? That means, if either of us notices that we're engaging in behaviors that aren't helping us, our brand or our ability to achieve our goals, we can bring this up to each other (via text, email, phone) knowing that our intentions are always positive and supportive. Can you commit to that?

The Continued Evolution of the New Normal

If managers aren't consistently coaching and communicating with their team, they'll lose touch of where their people are, who they are and what their needs are in order for them to maintain their performance and well-being.

Once you weave this conversation into your management cadence, your virtual team will soon become a productive, rewarding reality. ■

Keith Rosen is the CEO of Profit Builders and best selling author. [Managers, Learn How to Coach and Manage a Remote Team and Win More Sales. Online Course – on sale now!](#)

Building a “Customer Centric” Inside Nurture Team



Inside Sales teams often struggle due to incompatible goals. If they're judged on sales they focus on closing sales and look for prospects that are ready to buy right now, which is around 2%-3% of all prospects.



If they're judged on leads they focus on leads. The natural temptation is to stretch the boundaries and hand over anything that looks like it might be a lead to make their targets. Often this wastes Account Managers' time chasing leads that aren't really leads and breeds a lack of internal trust.

In both cases the most important area takes a back seat – ie; nurturing and educating the 97% of prospects who aren't ready to buy the first time you call them.

Many will buy eventually – IF you don't throw them away because they aren't ready yet and if you want to succeed in the long term it's important to nurture them so when they are ready you've developed trust.

People still want to do business with people they trust but if your focus is on qualifying them and then moving on it's hard to develop trust.

Your prospects get dozens of calls every day – if they're important enough for you to call, many others are calling them too - and if you're only qualifying

them, you're just another salesperson interrupting them. We know what prospects do and don't want because they tell us:

- They don't want you to waste their time.
- They don't want to be sold to or qualified.
- They don't want to be shepherded along a digital buyer's journey and tracked.
- They want to talk about their business challenges before they're ready to buy.
- They want to speak to people who understand their business and who can talk about their issues in their terminology.

Many companies say, “it's Inside Sales' job to sell, prospect and build relationships”. But in real life this doesn't happen, especially if you only reward leads and/or sales. Building future pipeline always suffers at the expense of short term targets. When there's an end of quarter push building relationships with people who aren't ready takes a back seat.

If you want to build a trusted relationship with prospects who will buy eventually you need to give them value every time you contact them.

A much more effective approach is what I call Authentic Relationship Management.

It helps Customer Centric Inside “Nurture” teams build trust by;

- Providing value and relevant information with every communication.
- Communicating consistently via all channels – phone, email, direct mail, digital.
- Listening, paying attention, understanding your

prospects' issues and responding appropriately.

- Speaking their language.
- Only providing relevant collateral.
- Eliminating inconsistent and contradictory messaging.
- Keeping commitments and following through.

Digital marketing can assist but you need one-on-one human contact to build trust. The sales process (as opposed to the buying process) begins when one human being talks to another. Your success depends on how that first conversation goes. A Customer Centric Inside Nurture team needs:

1. Predictive Analytics - to target the right companies that have a high propensity to buy. Nothing destroys credibility and wastes time more than targeting the wrong companies.

2. Accurate Contact Information - A Customer Centric Inside Nurture person's time is too valuable to waste on chasing the wrong people or wrong numbers.

3. Senior Consultants - People who can talk to prospects about their business issues at their level using their terminology. Using junior people to qualify if senior decision makers are important enough to flick to an Account Manager is disrespectful. Prospects hate salespeople who know nothing about them, their business or their issues. The first conversation is the most important one. And every conversation after that.

4. A One Integrated Database - That records every interaction with a prospect before they become a sales opportunity. Every interaction develops an overall impression. You need to have the full picture because a prospect will notice if you say contradictory things or ask questions they've already answered.

5. Role Based Messaging - Different Line of

Business executives all have different needs. You must understand their needs and perspective and talk to them about their stuff in their terminology.

6. Content as a Science - Different content is relevant to different people and at different levels of their Buyer's Journey. Customer Centric Inside Nurture people need to ensure that every piece of content they share is relevant to that specific person.

7. Nurture KPIs - You need a new set of metrics that measure your nurture efforts. We measure the number of conversations, number of relevant insights identified, movement along the trust journey, education content sent with permission, areas of interest secured, identifying future buying intentions, etc. Of course, we also measure the quantity and quality of leads that eventuate.

The Authentic Relationship Management process generates high quality leads with trusted relationships already in place.

Sales leaders sometimes say, *"we win one in five, so we need 5x leads in the pipeline"* You don't. You need better quality leads with trusted relationships in place. Your win ratios will skyrocket, your salespeople will waste less time chasing leads that will never convert, they will trust Inside Sales much more and your salesperson turnover will decrease. Fewer, better quality leads, means less stressed, happier sales people and more sales.

The future success of companies is in the investment in Authentic Relations before they are ready to buy. ■

John Bedwany is an innovator who developed the Authentic Relationship Management business platform. He is a member of the Sales Experts Channel and is CEO of the Database Dept. an Australian company that provides nurturing and demand generation for some of the world's biggest names including Adobe, HPE, IBM, Microsoft & SAP

2020 Roundtable Series



TOP SALES FUTURISTS
The Future of Professional Selling is Here

The Latest Top Sales Roundtable Recording Has Been Released

The Future of Professional Selling – What Will the New “Normal” Be Like?

“We all understand that we are currently in uncharted waters and our uncertainty and anxieties for the health of our loved ones, our careers and our companies are natural.

Nobody can predict with any confidence what the sales space is going to look like post-pandemic and returning to normality – yes, we will all win through this – is actually going to feel anything but normal.

What will change for sellers? How will buying change? What will the new landscape look like?”

Hosted by Jonathan Farrington, the expert panel comprised of George Brontén, Damon Jones, Dave Kurlan and Bill Morrison. [Please Watch Here](#)



George Brontén



Damon Jones



Dave Kurlan



Bill Morrison

A JF INITIATIVE



April's Top Sales Post

The business baseline of COVID-19
by Joe Galvin

In early March, COVID-19 set a series of shocks into motion: The stock market crashed. Borders closed. The economy plunged. Communities descended into quarantine.

One month later, a new business baseline has emerged. Across the country and around the world, total business activity is sitting at ground level, waiting to rise up.

While the COVID-19 crisis has devastated some industries, other industries have experienced a surge in business. In fact, our April survey* of 1,611 CEOs indicates that some, but not all, of small and midsize businesses are struggling:

- One-quarter (25%) of CEOs reported no change

or even improved revenues.

- A large group (44%) said revenues are down as much as 25%, but noted their businesses are still functioning. These leaders will need to make hard decisions regarding their workforce, the long-term impact on customers and their ability to survive more than a few months at this level of activity.
- Of greater concern are the 21% of CEOs that have seen business revenues decline between 25% and 75%. These leaders will be forced to make very difficult and painful choices very soon.
- Even more devastating, 6% of CEOs have seen revenues collapse by 75% or greater.

[Read Full Article Here](#)

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